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CRIME SEP 2017

Feds cracking down on adults using 'sextortion' to force kids into sending nude photos

*Kevin Krause, Federal Courts Reporter*

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Robert Dion Ables knew how to sound like a teenage girl.

That, a smartphone and a social media app were all he needed to trick a 14-year-old Canadian girl into sending him sexually explicit photos of herself.

If she refused to send more, Ables told the girl, he would post her photos on her Facebook page.

Such "sextortion" is a disturbing cybercrime, and the Justice Department has called it "by far" the most significant growing threat to children.

A federal judge gave Ables, of Hutchins, a sentence of 80 years in prison in July. At least two other North Texas men have recently been convicted of sextortion-related crimes in federal court. A

fourth man, from Dallas, used a similar extortion scheme to victimize his classmates at the University of Texas at Dallas.

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In most cases, the blackmailers pose as children on social media sites or a messaging app like Kik. The local cases, like others nationwide, have involved multiple — sometimes hundreds — of victims. Experts say smartphones and social media apps are behind the alarming rise in such crimes.

Federal prosecutors and judges in Texas are showing little mercy toward offenders, many of whom are spending decades behind bars.

Carl Rusnok, spokesman for Immigration and Customs Enforcement in Dallas, said adults study and practice for years to learn how to write like teenagers and children — an essential skill in pulling off their sextortion schemes.

"Children can be lured into these situations by professionals who know how to do this," he said. "And then they're blackmailed into showing more and more compromising photos."

But getting children to come forward is not always easy. Many boys victimized in one Texas case were too embarrassed to report the crimes, authorities said. Other child victims suffer from anxiety and depression, and have dropped out of school, cut themselves or killed themselves or attempted suicide, according to the Justice Department.



What is Sextortion?
Sextortion victims are coerced into providing sexually explicit images or videos of themselves, siblings, or friends. In many cases, the victims share inappropriate photos without knowing the recipient's "true identity."

How Does Sextortion Happen?
The offenders may pretend to be a child of similar age as the victim, then threaten to post the images publicly or send images to the victims' family and friends. Offenders often approach a child on one social networking site and convince them to move to anonymous messaging apps or video chats.

Protecting Against Sextortion:

- * Make children aware that anything done online may be available to others;
- * Make sure apps and privacy settings are set to the strictest level possible;
- * Parents should review and approve apps and monitor activity on all devices;
- * Regularly go through "friends" and "followers" list and delete anyone your child has not met in person;
- * Anyone who asks a child to engage in sexually explicit activity online should be reported to a parent, guardian, or law enforcement immediately.

To report suspected sextortion crimes, call your local FBI office or 1-800-CALL-FBI (225-5324)

(FBI)

In the federal system, such crimes usually are prosecuted as child pornography cases.

The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children started tracking sextortion in 2013 with a "Cyber Tipline" and found that the number of reports keeps rising every year. In 2015, more than 4 million cases were reported. The average age of victims is 15, and girls accounted for 78 percent of the reports made to the tip line, according to the center.

Kristen Howell is the chief programs officer for the Dallas Children's Advocacy Center, a nonprofit that coordinates the investigation and prosecution of severe child abuse cases and provides mental health services for victims.

She said her organization is seeing sextortion cases every week, some of which involve kids victimizing other kids. Howell said for young people, having their peers find out what happened to them is worse than the crime itself. As a result, the blackmail threats can be devastating, she said.

"It really, really ratchets up the trauma level," she said.

Howell said parents should talk with kids about what can happen on social media and offer to serve as their "safety net" rather than trying to ban them from using it.

Ables case

Ables, 40, was convicted on a child pornography charge. He had communicated with the victim on Kik Messenger with the username "itsmeyall1."

Initially, he asked for a photo of her face. Then he wanted photos in her underwear and "with her genitals exposed," a federal complaint said.



<http://JailBase.com>

Robert Dion Ables, Booked on Dec 13, 2016

Robert Dion Ables (Jailbase.com)

The girl said she sent him about 25 photos. In return, he sent her photos of a "similarly aged female engaging in similar behavior." The threats came when she stopped sending him photos.

She wasn't Ables' only victim. He told investigators he had been "engaging in an ongoing extortion scheme" using Kik Messenger since at least 2014.

Ables admitted also victimizing men. He did so while posing as a 14-year-old girl on Kik and sending them child pornography. In return, the men sent him explicit images of themselves. Ables said that's when he would extort them for money.

He claimed that he tried to extort 300 to 500 men, which earned him as much as \$50,000 since 2014, the complaint said. Agents found child pornography on his cellphone and evidence that he communicated with at least 10 men on Kik Messenger.

Turrubiartes case

Francisco Turrubiartes, 27, of Dallas, used a fake name while pretending to be a teenage girl on Facebook and hounded his victims for several years in some cases.

In 2012, Turrubiartes persuaded a 13-year-old girl to send him explicit photos of herself. For that, he was sentenced to 20 years in federal prison in June for producing child pornography.



CRIME

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It began when he sent a Facebook message to the girl's 15-year-old friend, asking her to send nude photos of herself. When the friend complied, Turrubiartes asked her to have the 13-year-old also send him nude photos. If she didn't, he would post her photos "all over the internet and tell her mother," authorities said.

Turrubiartes also demanded that the friend send him photos of her 2-year-old niece, court records show.



A safety warning from the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children and U.S. Department of Justice. (National Center for Missing & Exploited Children and U.S. Department of Justice)

Turrubiarres also sent the younger girl a Twitter message demanding more photos of herself and threatening to post her photos online if she didn't. The girl sent him photos. He continued to threaten her for three years, federal authorities said, and asked her for photos of her 6-year-old sister.

One witness said Turrubiarres "bragged on numerous occasions about creating fake profiles on Facebook and pretending to be female" in order to lure girls into sending him nude photos of themselves, according to court records.

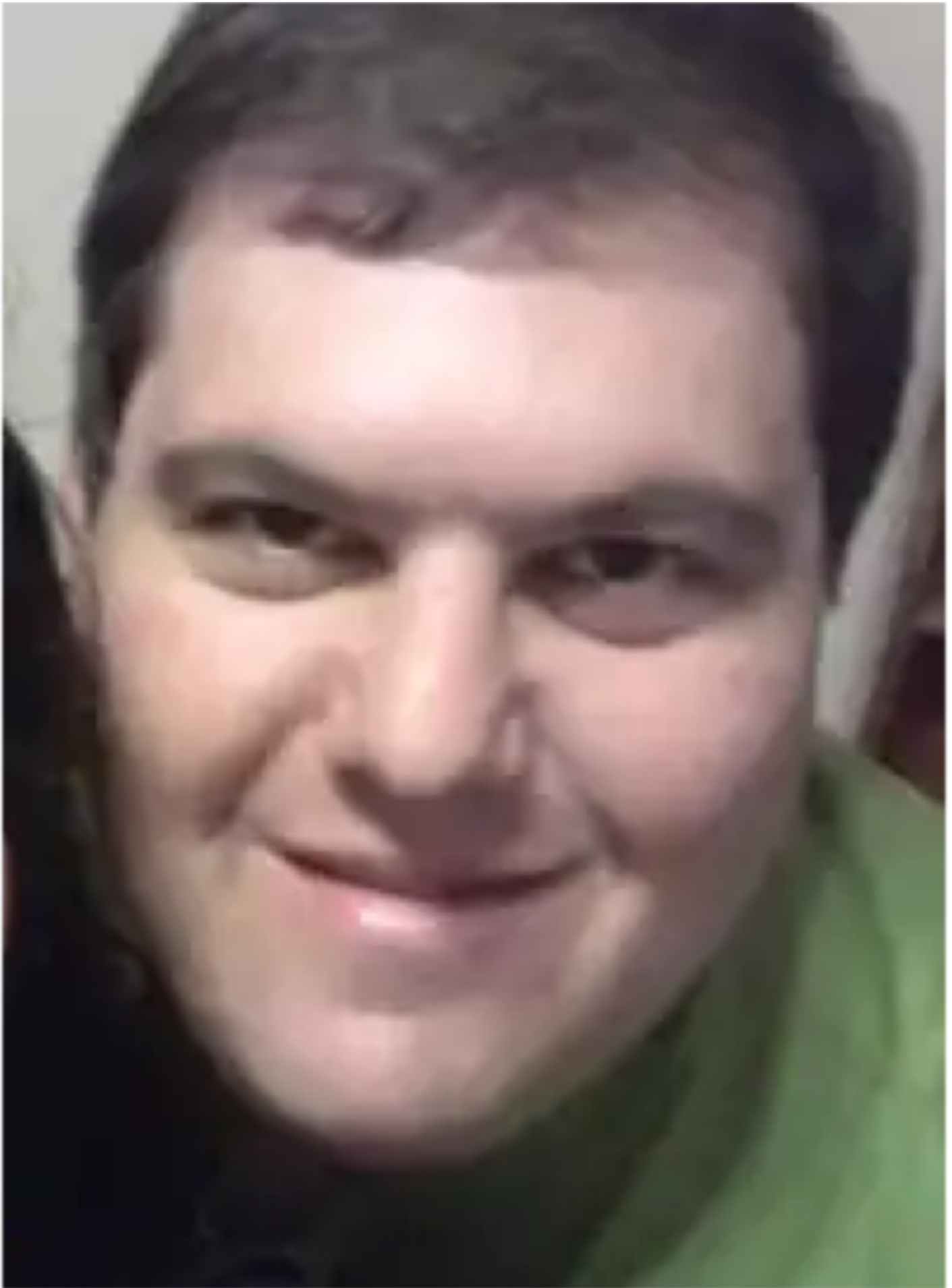
Bogomol case

Investigators still are not sure exactly how many kids Gregory Bogomol victimized. The final number could be in the hundreds, they think.

But of the 20 they found, many are deeply traumatized.

Bogomol, 41, a former Denton High School teacher, was given 60 years in federal prison in 2015.

The Fort Worth man tricked boys into sending him lewd photos of themselves by posing as a girl on social media. Agents found hundreds of photos of boys on his electronic devices. And like the other criminals, he used the threat of posting their photos online to get more from them.



Gregory Bogomol

Amanda Johnson, a special agent with [Homeland Security Investigations](#) in Dallas, said many of Bogomol's victims for years had no idea who extorted them. The experience left them paranoid, wondering when their photos would be posted online, she said. Parents noticed that their grades suffered and that they lost interest in sports.

The investigation began when a Louisiana mother reported that her 15-year-old son had inappropriate contact with someone claiming to be a young girl on the Kik app. The person, who turned out to be Bogomol, enticed the boy to send lewd photos of himself.

Bogomol also used the "hook-up" app, Grindr, to ensnare his victims, authorities said.

One suspect, a former Houston-area teacher's aide, actually went through with her threats against a child, police said.

Tamayo case

Kimberly Tamayo, 20, was charged in January. Police say Tamayo, who worked for the Pasadena school district, met the girl on Twitter and persuaded her to send nude photos of herself, police say. Tamayo threatened to tell the girl's family if she didn't send more photos.

When the girl didn't respond, Tamayo forwarded the nude photos to her family, police said.

"The child felt even more threatened and knew this was real," JoAnne Musick, who oversees the Harris County district attorney's sex crimes unit, told [ABC13 Eyewitness News](#) in January.

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